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President Shelly meets with Israeli Diplomats and Arizona Israel Business Council

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. —Navajo President Ben Shelly met with Israeli Consul General David Siegel and members of the Arizona Israel Business Council as they discussed priorities following the president's visit to Israel in December 2012.

"We've built a bridge with Israel," President Shelly said to the Israeli diplomat and Jonathan Breakstone, who leads the Arizona Israel Business Council. "We're going to bring our professionals in agriculture, technology, and education together with the experts we met in Israel."

President Shelly emphasized agriculture in Israel and the use of technology to conserve water in agribusiness as he visited thousands of acres of farming lands and green houses in Israel's Negev, an arid Israeli southern desert between Jordan and Egypt. Drip irrigation nourishes crops year around with yields as much as 10 times more than traditional farming. Water is drawn from a large aquifer, the Sea of Galilee, and from the desalination of seawater from the Mediterranean.

"Agriculture is just one part of our drive to economic prosperity," the president said. "Technology is the other. It's where we are going." The president described the Navajo Nation's capacity for technology and the new data center in Shiprock, and the new jobs it has created with more to come.

The consul general accepted the president's invitation to visit the Navajo Nation soon. In return the consul general welcomed the president to return to Israel, and committed to working on more meetings with Israeli government diplomats in Washington, D.C.

"You will always be honored guests in Israel," said Consul General Siegel to the president and Mrs. Shelly. The Israeli consul general pledged his commitment to the president's priorities for growth on the Navajo Nation. "We have many in the agricultural field who are ready to come to Navajo."

The president also spoke on education, the meetings held with Haifa University and Ben Gurion University and the invitations by deans and professors to embark on a student and faculty exchange with both nations.

The consulate general of Israel in Los Angeles is one of the largest diplomatic missions in the world covering Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming.

Others who attended the dinner meeting with the president and the Israeli consul general were Phyllis Kaminaky and Glenn Williamson. Jonathan Breakstone gave his commitment in working with the president, and will accompany the Israeli diplomats in their future Navajo Nation visit.

The Arizona Israel Business Council serves the commercial and social interactions of individuals, companies, and organizations in pursuing cross border relationships to increase business, support trade growth and investments in Arizona and Israel.

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